

Affordable and reliable energy supplies are the backbone of our economy, and indeed, our very way of life. But fluctuating fuel and electricity prices are placing a severe financial burden on Northern California's families, farms, and small businesses. While there is no "magic bullet" to roll back high prices, we can take meaningful steps today to ensure that America has an affordable and secure energy supply into the future. Because of the recent economic downturn, we have seen a temporary drop in prices. But these lower prices will be short lived and we must act now to increase U.S. supplies for when global demand goes back up.

I have long believed that protecting our environment and responsibly meeting our nation's energy needs are not mutually exclusive goals.

To address our nation's energy challenges, Congress should encourage responsible exploration of our abundant domestic supplies, not discourage these efforts, as we have seen recently through burdensome regulations and proposals for higher taxes. It is also imperative that we pursue an energy policy that is balanced. I've long supported tax incentives for the production of renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, biomass, hydroelectricity, and geothermal. Though today these sources of energy only provide for a small percentage of our needs, they represent a significant aspect of America's energy portfolio and will be an increasingly important part of our nation's energy mix in the future.

When America experienced its first energy crisis in the 1970s, we imported roughly 30 percent of our oil from foreign nations. Today, that number is twice as high. In my view, putting our energy security in the hands of volatile regimes around the world is simply irresponsible from an economic and security standpoint. I've long supported efforts to allow for the exploration of oil and natural gas in a small section of the frozen "ANWR" tundra in Alaska. ANWR spans nearly 20 million acres, but energy exploration would only occur on 2,000 acres, or *.01 percent* of the land area. And importantly, 21st Century technology would also allow us to recover energy resources without harming the environment. Energy exploration in ANWR is conservatively estimated to be able to produce 1 million additional barrels of oil per year - about the same amount we now import from Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. In addition, America's offshore resources could prove even more beneficial than ANWR, with estimates coming in at up to 115 billion barrels.

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